

Inside Labor**British Unions
Face Invasion**

By VICTOR RIESEL



Mr. Riesel

LONDON — The slim, gray-haired chap, suitcase in hand, who entered the Hotel Westbury's quiet lounge, certainly did not look like the "chief" of an underground organization replete with several thousand activists.

But he is — and he had one of the biggest and most startling untold stories of the western world. He talked soberly with admirable British understatement of the successful penetration by the Chinese Communists into the big metropolitan nations thousands of miles from the jungles and swamps of Viet Nam.

My friend, who is high in the command of a powerful British union with 1.14 million members, spoke of intensive Maoist operations on the industrial front in Britain despite the Isles' urban and urbane character.

Quite simply, as his story unfolded, he said that this should be a warning to the U.S. that America is not immune to Maoist political invasion on the labor front.

My visitor's union is the powerful Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) whose members truly operate the entire British economy. They are at strategic posts in power plants, gas works, atomic installations, defense establishments, huge factories and new skyscrapers. If they struck for a week, they could paralyze England. The recent shipping strike, by comparison, would have been four o'clock tea.

Yet, one of its most influential leaders, Reg Birch, member of the sprawling union's seven man "executive," is an avowed Maoist and leader of the Peking faction inside the official Communist Party of Britain which Birch helped to build.

At the moment, Birch, whose base is the London section of this powerful AEU, and his tens of thousands of supporters are wending a pulsating machine for a drive to make him president of the organization at its national elections next summer.

Birch is considered too militant even for the Communist Party here. During the party's 29th convention back in November, he attempted to force the Soviet-oriented C.P. to resolve to spend much more of its funds and energy on the expansion of its "factory branches" and to

step up its "industrial action." This means, in Communist parlance, the provoking of thousands of strikes.

My guest did not fear Reg Birch. Rather, my friend and his colleagues in the union leadership had realized the full force of traditional Communist and Maoist strength and had quietly gone about organizing an anti-Communist underground.

They now are fighting Reg Birch's Maoist network as Reg Birch would fight Reg Birch.

The anti-Communists in the AEU are using a small publishing house as a front. From this office, they mail large quantities of anti-Communist literature. My source reported hundreds of full time organizers now spend considerable time spreading anti-Communist propaganda. Appealing to the factory workers, they spread through the country, sit around in workingmen's pubs, play darts with the local people, spot the Communists, refute their arguments and talk up democratic theses.

Of course, they concentrate in London and the big Midland cities where AEU members are numerous. In addition, the AEU anti-Communist leaders have made contact with at least 1,000 of their members who are in town councils. These minor officials know who the AEU members are in each community and make subtle contact with them — always quietly making anti-Communist propaganda.

There is nothing melodramatic about my friend's operation.

He and his colleague, Sir William Carron, AEU president, a dedicated champion of democratic unionism and a friend of the U.S. are aware of the machine which the Communists are throwing against them in the coming election when a successor to the retiring Sir William will be chosen.

The Communists, Maoist and traditional, always have ample funds. They, for example, control a factory which hires Communists whenever one is fired from a job or when one wants a job which will make him eligible for membership in the AEU. The Peking group never needs to look long for activists. They have the young men and women — who have organized everything from boogie squads to baby sitters